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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE
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U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY,
RANKING MEMBER

October 18, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

As you know, Section 1088 of the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (PL 117-21) required the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security to brief the House Armed Services Committee on how the Department has secured, archived, and standardized operational data and intelligence gathered over the past two decades in Afghanistan, and how this data could be accessed across the Joint Force. This briefing was due March 4, 2022.

We are currently in October -- over seven months past the statutory deadline and over a year since the failed Afghanistan withdraw. I am disappointed the Committee has not received this mandated briefing. I am also concerned that in the 14 months since the withdrawal, critical data has been lost, misplaced, or is otherwise inaccessible.

The intelligence is clear: Al-Qaeda is reforming in Afghanistan. We will once again be facing the prospect of terrorist attacks on American interests abroad and possibly the homeland itself.

As a Special Forces veteran, who served multiple tours in Afghanistan and fought Al-Qaeda and their Taliban backers, I dread a future where American soldiers will once again take on this threat. However, next time, we will be sending them in with no bases, no local allies, and an enemy that is armed with equipment we left behind following our disastrous, ill-planned, and shortsighted withdrawal in August 2021.

We must ensure the lessons learned from the two-decade conflict are not lost or misplaced. The operational and intelligence data from Afghanistan is important for a wholistic understanding of the war and must be accessible if future campaigns in Afghanistan occur.

I once again request, as mandated by Federal Law, to know what efforts, if any, did your Department make to secure and preserve operational data from the Afghanistan War. The point of contact on my staff for this matter is Walker Barrett (walker.barrett@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress